

# Kosmas Facing Big Challenges

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For Florida Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas, making the leap from state politics to Congress has not been difficult.

By Amy Williams

WASHINGTON, D.C.- For Florida Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas, making the leap from state politics - to Congress has not been difficult. Rep. Kosmas, who served as a Florida State legislator for 4 consecutive terms, now has two months under her belt on Capitol Hill. She says the issues are similar, but admits everything is on a much larger scale. She has plenty to keep her busy.

As a member of the House Financial Services Committee, Rep. Kosmas is focused on the flailing economy.

"The economic crisis presents an enormous challenge. It's a very daunting situation the country finds itself in," she says. With the recent uproar over bonuses numbering in the millions of dollars paid to American International Group executives, Rep. Kosmas is all too aware of how that sits with her constituents in the 24th District. "I think there is no question we have to find some way to create equity for the taxpayer," says the Congresswoman. She acknowledged the bonuses were "a bitter pill to swallow" and hence she voted with the Democratic majority in the House to tax those payouts to the AIG executives.

Rep. Kosmas said she's also very concerned with how small business owners in the 24th District will remain afloat during these hard economic times. She has introduced bipartisan legislation, the Equity for Our Nation's Self-Employed Act, which is designed to provide tax relief to "sole proprietors" to the tune of \$1,850 per year. Rep. Kosmas said, that money will enable a small business owner to provide health care premiums without having to pay a tax on them. Currently, the self-employed must pay an additional 15.3% tax on any health care premiums, a provision within the tax code which Rep. Kosmas said she finds unacceptable.

The growing number of home foreclosures is another problem the local Rep. and Congress are struggling with. The Center for Responsible Lending projects more than 44,000 foreclosures in the next 4 years for Florida's 24th District.

Recently, Rep. Kosmas helped pass the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act. The bill, which is now in the Senate, is designed to assist homeowners in renegotiating their loans and help them avoid bankruptcy. Rep. Kosmas advised struggling homeowners to visit [www.HUD.gov](http://www.HUD.gov) or the Consumer Credit Counseling Service in their community. Those agencies, she said, will help put a homeowner in touch with a legitimate business that can assist in avoiding a foreclosure. Too often, said the New Smyrna Beach businesswoman - turned Congress member, a desperate homeowner will pay an upfront fee to an entity - which doesn't deliver on its promises. She advised people should be cautious and to get help before they fall into a foreclosure situation.

Rep. Kosmas also sits on the House Science and Technology Committee. Increasing her strength as an advocate for the space program.

NASA has come under intense criticism over schedule delays and cost management. In a time when federal money is tight. Some argue, tax dollars would be better used elsewhere. "NASA, as an economic engine is humongous," said the Central Florida lawmaker, "not just in the 24th District but nationwide." She added the U.S. can't afford to let countries like China pass it by in the area of space exploration.

Just last week, the Representative, along with 13 other Congressional members from both sides of the political aisle, sent a letter to President Obama urging him to name a new NASA administrator as quickly as possible. Rep. Kosmas told The Observer, "Thousands of jobs at the Kennedy Space Center and tens of thousands across Central Florida are at risk due to the pending spaceflight gap."

The Space Shuttle is due to be retired sometime in 2010 and it would be five years before a new spacecraft could be used to access the International Space Station. While Rep. Kosmas maintained NASA "must be held accountable for projects it puts forward," she also stressed - space exploration is inherently risky and because of it's scope, expensive.

Throughout her fairly brief time on Capitol Hill, Rep. Kosmas has maintained a close connection with the people who sent her north - to her 'life inside the Beltway.' Each weekend, she's returned to the 24th District. Holding numerous meetings and conferences with community leaders and the public - attempting to keep the District informed about what's going on in Washington - and what it means to the future economic health of Central Florida.

